

MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
October 20, 2000

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Lyle Asell
Neil Bernstein
Robin Fortney
Kathy Gourley
Gary Phillips, Chairperson
Timothy Sproul
Lois Tiffany

ADVISORS PRESENT

Robert McKay
Shirley Schermer

ADVISORS ABSENT

Dorothy Baringer
Rebecca Conard
Diane Ford-Shivvers
Jan Nash
Daryl Smith

STAFF PRESENT

Daryl Howell
John Pearson
Steve Pennington
Jim Zohrer

CALL TO ORDER

Gary Phillips called the meeting to order at 8:34 A.M.

APPROVE AGENDA

Add: 11A - Review Action Plan
4A - Brushy Creek Trails Advisory Update
4B - CARA

<p><i>Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Kathy Gourley. Motion carried unanimously.</i></p>
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OATH OF OFFICE

Chairperson Phillips administered the Oath of Office to new board members, Neil Bernstein, Robin Fortney, and Timothy Sproul and welcomed them to the board.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion was made by Timothy Sproul to approve minutes as presented. Seconded by Neil Bernstein. Motion carried unanimously.

FORT ATKINSON FIELD SCHOOL UPDATE

Update on the status of the planning efforts for the proposed 2001 field school.

Shirley Schermer said the DNR had provided funds to hire Lynn Alex, through an agreement with the OSA, to write the grant applications for the field school. She will also be available to assist in making arrangements for credit facilities, to help coordinate with the tribe and other potential partners, and to help advertise the field school. Shirley Schermer said the lead agency needed to be determined for the purpose of grant applications.

Brief discussion followed with the consensus being that OSA should be the lead agency.

Ms. Schermer gave the board a copy of the announcement that was being distributed as advertisement.

Brief discussion followed regarding the distribution of the flyer.

BRUSHY CREEK UPDATE

Robin Fortney said she had attended a Brushy Creek Trails Advisory meeting the previous week. They toured the new trails in the south portion of the park. She said there was some friction between some of the trail riders and people who are using the trails for biking or other purposes. However, DNR has stressed that the trails are not exclusively for equestrian use. She reported that the users are not riding through the preserve area because they have been given other options. The trail riders have taken responsibility for keeping the trails clean and have scheduled some regular work days at Brushy Creek for this purpose. She said they had briefly discussed the Destination Park that has been proposed for Brushy Creek and they said they would like to have some input in the discussion. She said the Area Manager of Brushy Creek had work really hard at signage and mapping of the trail systems.

CARA UPDATE

Lyle Asell said that it appeared CARA would be moving through interior appropriations at a substantially lower level of funding than originally anticipated.

BUDGET

Steve Pennington said DNR staff has reviewed the requests for budget increases from the board and the decision was made to approve those requests. The increase in research funding, funding for interpretive signs, funding for printing, and funding for public outreach programs will be increased from funds in the current budget. However the request for the full time employee must be approved by the legislature. Although the requests have gone to the Governor's office they are still a long way from being approved and therefore not something that should be counted on. The staff discussed the Board's suggestion for giving the Preserve Board a separate cost center, and although it could be done it was something that should be considered carefully. He said being part of a larger budget allows for less scrutiny and the ability to transfer funds from one area to another. He said he would like to see the board planning ahead for the next budgeting session and putting their requests in early.

Gary Phillips said that the Board had decided in the last meeting that instead of asking for a line item budget they would like to see a breakdown of funds will be spent in the preserves system. He thanked staff for their efforts in approving the \$13,000 increase in budget.

Lyle Asell explained the current budget, and the problems encountered in the budgeting process.

Brief discussion followed.

SEED HARVEST REQUESTS

Kossuth County Conservation Board

Kossuth County Conservation Board requested permission to harvest seed by hand and with a flail-vac from Stinson Prairie State Preserve. Because the seed will be used on properties owned by the County Conservation Board and the minimal disturbance of these harvest techniques, staff gave permission to conduct the harvest. The Conservation Board was asked to provide a report on the harvest and the success of seedlings as a condition of the harvest.

Daryl Howell explained that staff had already approved this request and this was for information only.

Dr. Daryl Smith

Dr. Smith requests permission to hand collect seed from prairie bush clover from several preserves. The seed will be used for a study of the establishment of the species at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Daryl Howell said that this was a decision item, and that Dr. Smith is doing the study under a permit that Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge already has in place.

Gary Phillips said past efforts to reestablish prairie bush clover have had mixed results. He said in the 1980's he experimented with harvesting and reestablishing prairie bush clover at Anderson Prairie with a great deal of

success. He explained that Dr. Daryl Smith's grad student is planning to follow up on those results.

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to approve the request as presented. Seconded by Timothy Sproul. Motion carried unanimously.

John Pearson said Owen Godney from the Neal Smith Refuge is working with the Omaha Zoo who has been laboratory rearing the Western Prairie French Orchid and that work is drawing to a close. They have several dozen plants that originated from Sesauks in Iowa and would like to make the final destination for those plants the Neal Smith Refuge. Toward this end the researchers requested Iowa prairie soil for this project, which was collected from gopher mounds and a small amount of fresh sod from Sheeder Prairie State Preserve.

Dr. Arnold van der Valk

As director of the Lakeside Laboratory, Dr. Arnold van der Valk has indicated an early interest in harvesting bulk seed from Cayler Prairie in the fall of 2001 for planting at Lakeside Lab. DNR wildlife biologist Doug Harr also plans on harvesting seed at Cayler Prairie in fall 2001 for a planting on the addition to Cayler Prairie.

John Pearson said this was simply an advance notice of a future request.

Brief discussion followed regarding the specific details of the Lakeside Laboratory project and the quality of seed at Cayler Prairie.

PRESERVES GUIDE

Update on the publication status of the guide.

John Pearson said the Department hired Ruth Herzberg to do the research, compilation and drafting of a new Preserves Guide. After 18 months the guide has been delivered to the University of Iowa Press for editing, with an anticipated publication date of summer of 2001. He said the Department has paid some of the costs up front allowing the book to be available to the public at a cost of \$15.00.

IOWA ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

A symposium at the Iowa Academy of Science meeting regarding re-vitalization of the Natural Areas Inventory was mentioned at the July meeting.

Gary Phillips said after a lengthy discussion about the possibility of having a symposium in conjunction with Iowa Academy of Science Meeting in April of 2001, the board had decided to wait and consider holding the symposium in the fall of 2001. He listed some of the items that influenced this decision, such as the timing in regard to legislative sessions, the lack of having a preserves guide

available for the legislature, and the Board's desire to hear more about the Governor's plans for a symposium.

After a short discussion the decision to wait was confirmed. Gary Phillips said by the fall the Board will have completed their long-range plan, that could be used along with their strategic plan and the Preserves Guide as information for legislators.

UPDATE ON LOESS HILLS SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

John Pearson distributed a map and a hard copy of the National Parks Service Briefing Statement. He said the National Parks Service has become involved in looking at the feasibility of establishing some type of a National Parks Service Unit in the Loess Hills. National Park Service has worked with both the Loess Hills Alliance and the Department of Natural Resources during this study. During this study the Department used the 1980 infrared aerial photographs to do a complete delineation of the prairies in the Loess Hills landform. The total number of prairie in 1980 was 22,500 acres, which is approximately 2/3 of the total number estimated prairie acres in Iowa. The Department contracted with the State Archeologist to create a GIS database all of the archeological points that occurred in the Loess Hills. The Department contracted with the Iowa National Heritage Foundation to digitize all of the land ownership parcels in the Loess Hills Land Form. In addition the Department used a portion of the Park Service money to hire Connie Matel, author of "Fragile Giants" to write the natural history portion of the final report that the National Park Service is writing.

John Pearson said there was a series of public meetings held in the Loess Hills, one per county in March for preliminary public input. He said there would be another set of five public meetings held in November, four in Loess Hills and one in Des Moines. He said the study phase is drawing to a close and the Park Service is preparing to go public with six alternatives identified in the Briefing Statement. Mr. Pearson reviewed the alternatives.

Lyle Asell said there is a great deal of public concern from the landowners that the Federal Government is going to come in and buy up all of the land in the Loess Hills. He said he has asked Mike Brandrup, Administrator of the Forestry Division to be a contact person for the DNR and to coordinate the efforts of the Department and the various local organizations and groups. He said the Department needed to do a better job of communicating the uniqueness and value of the Loess Hills and the multitude of options for landowners. He said it is not just a land acquisition program.

Tim Sproul said he is a board member of the Loess Hills Alliance, an organization that was formed approximately two years ago. He said there is a disparity within the alliance itself along with the general community as to what should be done within the hills. The most vocal concerns are dealing with federal ownership of land or federal control. The issue of land acquisition or protection

through acquisition or easements is a very volatile issue within the alliance. The alliance feels pressured from the speed of the National Park Service study and they are concerned about the briefing paper listing six options when they believe there are a lot of other options that should be available to them. He said the alliance has approved and is in the process of conducting a statistically valid survey of the residents of the Loess Hills. It will be a phone survey that looks at the total residents of the Loess Hills and landowners. He hopes this survey will provide a better picture as to what the people want.

Gary Phillips said he could understand the position of the landowners, he suggested looking at the hills from the standpoint of a national grassland, which would put it into the Forest Service, which would fall under the Department of Agriculture.

Lyle Asell said the solution would likely require a combination of options.

ROCK ISLAND PRESERVE

Thy hydrology report for the Highway 100 near Rock Island Preserve has been completed. The report was reviewed by Geologic Survey Bureau staff, which indicated that there should be no impact to the wetland on the preserve. A survey of the mussel resources at the Cedar River bridge crossing and a study of noise impacts were completed. The study of the butterflies of the area will be completed soon.

Daryl Howell said the concern was for the northeast corner of the preserve. He said from the hydrology study there did not appear to be any threat to the wetland.

Bob McKay reviewed the report findings for the board. He said there is 25 to 26 feet of fine to medium grain sand over silt over clay over bedrock. The recharge appears to flow from northeast area to the southwest area. The railroad bridge sits on a surface water drainage divide. To the south, it flows to the preserve, to the west it flows to the Cedar River. He said if the road follows the railroad bridge and there are no big cuts or fills there will be no impact of the groundwater flow in the preserve.

Daryl Howell said when he talked to the DOT they were unsure of how the road was to be aligned but thought it would be flat. The Department is waiting for the results of some additional studies that have been conducted. He said they had received a copy of the noise study. Linn County Conservation Board is concerned about how Rock Island Preserve is being classified. Daryl Howell said the study classifies the preserve with an Activity Category of B, which has the Description of Land Use Activity Category of picnic areas, recreation areas, playgrounds etc. He said Activity Category A better fits the preserve. Category A description is for tracts of land for which serenity and quiet are of extraordinary significance and which serve an important public need. He said it was the Departments concern that this study minimizing the quality of the area.

John Pearson this classification is important because it directly effects the size of the sound barrier that will need to be constructed.

Lengthy discussion followed.

Kathy Gourley said she agreed with the Linn County Conservation Board's Position Paper that the Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Department have not made a concentrated effort to look at all the different alternatives. She said she would be supportive of the Board sending a letter similar to the Linn County Conservation Board's Position Paper asking them to make sure they have looked at the cumulative impacts and the full range of possibilities.

Lengthy discussion followed.

Chairperson Gary Phillips said even though there is a lot of information that is not yet available Linn County Conservation Board has taken a stand. He said he believed that the Preserves Advisory Board should issue a statement at this time to let Linn County Conservation Board know that the Preserves Advisory Board is behind them.

Motion was made by Kathy Gourley to write a letter to Linn County Conservation Board in support of their position against the proposed Highway. Seconded by Neil Bernstein. Motion carried unanimously.

Kathy Gourley and Robin Fortney volunteered to compose the letter for review by Daryl Howell and John Pearson.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Jim Zohrer has been hired as the new coordinator for the Wildlife Diversity Program. He will discuss direction of the program and an initiative to prepare a plan for bird conservation in the state.

Jim Zohrer updated the Board on what is happening in the Wildlife Diversity Program and what some of their future goals are. He said the biggest change is that one of the biologist positions has been upgraded to a central office coordinator position, which is the position he has been transferred to. The other staff members are Kim Bogenschutz, Biologist, Pat Schlarbaum, Natural Resource Technician and Bruce Ehresman, Natural Resource Technician.

He said he would like to increase the visibility of the Wildlife Diversity Program through media and more attendance at large public programs. He felt the public would support the program strongly if they know what it is, what is being done, and what can be done with additional staff and funding. He said if CARA funding comes through they would like to hire additional staff. He said he would like to see the Diversity Program working more with the managing bureaus to do training on what can be done in land management practices to benefit all species

of wildlife. He would like to involve volunteers to a greater degree in the program as well as increase the communication of the results to those volunteers. They would like to work more with private landowners and private organizations in the program. One of his personal goals for this position is to improve communication between field staff and central office staff at all levels.

He said One of the first tasks he would be working on in this new position is preparing a bird conservation initiative. He said there are a number of different bird groups working on bird conservation plans for North America, they have all had defined areas that they wanted to work on. The North American Bird Conservation initiative is a group of individuals that were put together to combine all of these bird groups into one plan.

Mr. Zohrer said due to their limited staff they may be phasing out some of the seed harvest off of State Preserves, turning those activities over to the full time team that has been hired by the Wildlife Bureau called the seed harvest team.

At a previous meeting the diversity staff asked permission to harvest seed off the state preserves. Pat Schlarbaum, the lead person for that activity has compiled the following information as a preliminary report: As of October 19th the hand harvest of seed is completed. Approximately 37 species of forbes and grasses were harvested from Sheedar, Kalsow, Steele, Hayden, Rolling Thunder, and Medora Prairie with the volume being approximately double what it was last year.

REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN

Gary Phillips said last July the Board completed the process and approved the strategic plan and action steps and they needed to review the progress toward those goals. Several tasks were assigned a deadline of October of 2000 and the board discussed what had been accomplished toward the individual tasks.

Gary Phillips said the long-range plan, and the new preserves guide need to be finished before the Preserves Advisory Board can address some of the action steps that have been identified.

Discussion followed regarding the progress on the long-range plan followed.

Gary Phillips suggested having a work session the day before the January meeting with the goal of having a final draft of the long-range plan in April and approving it during the July meeting.

Brief discussion followed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Daryl Howell said Chapter 61 is an administrative rule that handles provisions on parks, recreation areas, and preserves that is currently in the process of being revised. Current law includes language that allows persons with a handicap

access to wildlife areas using OHV's. This rule currently includes preserves. He said he was concerned because several of the preserves are not safe for OHV's and because of potential damage to other preserves. He said since the rule was open it would be a good time for the Preserves Advisory Board to make comments or recommendations for revision.

Brief discussion followed.

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to add a formal amendment to Chapter 61 that would require the area manager to consult preserve staff when they receive a request for a permit to use an OHV on a preserve. Seconded by Neal Bernstein. Motion carried unanimously.

John Pearson said he would like to acknowledge appreciation for Laura McCormick and Martha Speilman for conducting the fieldtrip and to the County Conservation Board for hosting the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

January meeting will be held on January 18 and 19, 2001.

BOARD TOUR

The State Preserves Advisory Board toured Lamson Woods State Preserve, Woodthrush Woods State Preserve, and Fairfield City Park.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Robin Fortney to adjourn. Seconded by Neal Bernstein. Motion carried unanimously.

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Gary Phillips adjourned the meeting at 12:15, Friday, October 20, 2000.

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